NATIONAL WATERWAY (SADIYA-DHUBRI STRETCH OF THE BRAHMAPUTRA RIVER) BILL, 1988

THE DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: Shri Rajesh Pilot to move the next Bill.

THE MINISTER OF STATE OF THE MINISTRY OF SURFACE TRANSPORT (SHRI RAJESH PILOT): Madam, I move:

> "That the Bill to provide for the declaration of the Sadiya-Dhubri Stretch of the Brahmaputra river to be a national waterway and also to provide for the regulation and development of the said stretch of that river for purposes of shipping and navigation on the said waterway and for matters connected therewith or incidental thereto, as passed by Lok Sabha. be taken into consideration."

Madam, with your permission I would like to say a few words while moving the National Waterway (Sadiya-Dhubri Stretch of the Brahmaputra river) Bill, 1988 for consideration and passing of the same. From time immemorial Inland Water Transport has served as a cheap and economic means of transport in India. With the advent of other faster means of transport like rail, road and air, the inland water transport has got neglected over the years.

Inland water transport has however maintained its edge over the other modes of transport in certain areas, where it enjoys natural advantages.

Today IWT is recognised all over the world for its inherent advantages of being the cheapest mode of transport for bulk haulage over long distance between places situated along the water-front. Its energy efficiency, low pollution and potential for employment generation is also universally accepted.

Since Independence, the Government of India has been seized of the need to develop inland water transport infrastructure and restore its rightful place in the overall transport system of the country.

The subject, Inland Water Transport, finds place in all the three lists of the Seventh Schedule to the Constitution of India. However, shipping and navigation on National waterways declared as such by Parliament is the exclusive responsibility of the Union. The responsibility and executive authority for development and maintenance of all waterways other than those declared as National waterways rests with the State Governments.

Keeping in view the slow pace of the development of inland water transport in our country, several committees constituted by the Government of India have recommended declaration of certain important waterways as National waterways. A beginning in this regard has already been made by declaring the Allahabad-Haldia stretch of the Ganga-Bhagirathi Hooghly river system as National waterway. The Government has constituted Inland Waterways Authority of India for the development, maintenance and regulation of National Waterways for shipping and navigation. Presently, the Inland Waterways Authority of India is executing three schemes at a total cost of Rs. 24.00 crores for development of the Allahabad-Haldia National Waterway on the Ganges.

Before a waterway can be considered for declaration as National Waterway, it is essential to undertake techno-economic feasibility studies and hydrographic surveys to assess the extent of development works required and the financial implications. Such studies in respect of Godavari, the West Coast Canal (Quilon-Cochin Section), the Krishna and Sunderbans have already been undertaken. The hydrographic surveys and techno-economic study in respect of Sadiya-Dhubri stretch of Brahmaputra have

been carried out. On the basis of studies and the potential of improvements in inland water transportation of this stretch, it is now being proposed to declared the Sadiya-Dhubri stretch of Brahmaputra river, also as a National Waterway. The National Waterway (Sadiya-Dhubri stretch of the Brahmaputra river) Bill, 1988 was passed by the Lok Sabha on 13th May, 1988.

It will be observed that the Bill is purely a non-controversial measure which I hope will be accepted by the House.

Madam, I move for leave for consideration of the National Waterway (Sadiya-Dhubri Stretch of the Brahmaputra River) Bill, 1988.

The question was proposed.

SHRI TALARI MANOHAR (Andhra Pradesh): Madam, I thank you for giving me this opportunity.

India has navigable waterways of nearly 14,500 Kms. This includes river system, canal system, backwaters, and other sources. But according to the information available with me, we are actually utilising at present 2,500 kms. by mechanical craft and only 1,000 km. by boat. Even here, only a very few States are covered. I would like to know from the hon. Minister why we have neglected this, why we have miserably neglected this, all these years. The time has come now when we should expand this. Why do I advocate this? This is because experts have calculated that inland water transport is three times cheaper than rail traffic and 7.5 times cheaper than road traffic. This will also result in lesser use of oil and coal because these items are priced high. In addition, in the case of inland water transport, there will be lesser pollution. This will also generate employment and the weaker sections will be benefited.

Coming to Andhra Pradesh, Godavari and Krishna are most suitable for inland water transport. The Buckingham and the Commanur canals should be linked to streamline the water transport system. If this is done, a navigation route of about 650 kms. from Kakinada Port to Madras Port would be available. The Andhra Pradesh Government have sent proposals for the development of canals of more than 1,000 kms. These include: improvement of Buckingham canal-258 kms.; Commanur canal-113 kms.; Eluru canal-138 kms. and Kakinada canal-47 kms. I would request the hon. Minister to clear these proposals. Also, the Central Government should extend financial assistance for the purpose of development of these canals.

Then, Madam, the Tungabhadra dam is a huge project. There is a canal from Hospet to Andhra Pradesh. Navigation facilities are already provided in the canal. I would request the hon. Minister that this should be utilised for navigation purposes.

Before concluding, I would like to point out that when the Minister of Surface Transport visited Andhra Pradesh last time, he promised that Rs. 15 crores would be given to the State for development of canals in the State. But so far, this amount has not come from the Centre. I would request the hon. Minister to give this amount to the State immediately. I would once again request the hon. Minister to clear the proposals sent by the Andhra Pradesh Government in regard to development of canals. This will on a long way in the development of inland water transport in the State of Andhra Pradesh Thank you.

SHRI JASHWANT SINHA (Bihar): Madam Deputy Chairman, it is a measure of our utter indifference to an important national topic as this that Mr. Rajesh Pilot is perhaps backed by over a couple of Members

[Shri Jaswant Singh]

on the treasury benches behind him. Everybody seems to have left.

SHRI ASHWANI KUMAR (Bihar): There are two Ministers and only one Member.

SHRI RAJESH PILOT: I consider your support also as my support.

SHRI YASHWANT SINHA: Madam Deputy Chairman, the hon. Minister pointed out that the importance hat is given to inland water transport. I submit that this is something which has been pointed out in this country since a long time ago. The problem is not one of understanding. The problem is one of action.

The stretch of Sadiya-Dhubri which is now sought to be declared as a waterway is a very welcome development. But considering that the navigation on this stretch of the Brahmaputra started in 1863, this kind of legislation should be coming today before us is a matter of some concern. Inland water transport, apart from the advantages which the hon. Minister has mentioned, has one or two other advantages which are of great socio-economic importance. One of them is that inland water transport development is very labour-intensive, employment-intensive of which I am sure, the hon. Minister is aware. This in one area in which per unit investment leads to much greater employment potential than in any other mode of transport.

The other very important consideration which should weigh with us when discussing the inland water transport is that any development in this sector is going to benefit the weaker sections of society. This I consider as one of the most important aspects of the development of inland water transport—that the weaker sections, and we know who they are, are the ones who are likely to benefit most from it. But as I said, it is a matter of great regret that despite the fact that national waterways were mentioned as a subject in our Constitution, as the Minister has pointed out, it took us an abnormally long time to come out with the first Bill. The first Bill declaring Allahabad-Haldia stretch of Ganga as national waterway was introduced in 1982 and was passed by Parliament in that year. I was going through the debate of that year to refresh my memory because I had some hand in the preparation of that Bill. I found that Shri Sitaram Kesri, who was the Minister then, had given an assurance that they would try to develop this waterway as quickly as possible. The Members in this House were trying to tell him that we should develop oil the infrastructure and the regular flow should start right upto Allahabad in three years' time. While the Minister did not give a specific assurance, he did say that it would be his best endeavour to ensure that this development took place within this time frame. Now we are discussing Brahmaputra as the national waterway in 1988, but the development of inland water transport on the already declared naional waterway between Haldia and Allahabad has not taken place according to the plans which the Ministry had.

I was going through the Annual Report of the Ministry and I was constrained to notice that river services are still running only upto Patna. It says: Calcutta Patna-Calcutta. I remember at one time when I used to deal with the subject in the Ministry, wt used to run services even upto Buxar. Now even that seems to have gone into disuse.

Declaration of a waterway as a national waterway is in itself not important unless we have enough funds and we have enough will to see that transport actually takes place and cargoes are actually moved. In this connection, I would like to point out that the figures which have been given in the Annual Report for

the year 1987 show that the movement of cargo all over—this includes Brahmaputra, this includes the national waterway between Haldia and Allahabad in the Ganga and all other waterways—has remained stagnant. In fact, as the Annual Report of the Ministry shows, there has been a shortfall of 12 per cent, both in freight earned and tonne kilometre moved. Anybody who knows something about transport movement, especially water transport movement, is aware that the unit of measurement is tonne kilometre; it is not in absolute terms. And there it has registered a decline. Why has it gone down? Because of sudden deterioration in channel conditions in the Assam sector causing detention of vessels going up and down and coming along the main trunk routes.

Now we are declaring this as a national waterway. The Minister has pointed out in his opening statement that hydrographic and traffic surveys have been carried out. He has mentioned some other waterways where these surveys have been carried out. I would like to know specifically what has happened to cargo movement between Calcutta and Guwahati in the first place? In this sector, a lot of movement used to take place, but there were also a lot of problems. It appears to me that these problems still continue to bedevil the movement of cargo. There is so much in Assam which can be moved by inland wateways and there is so much in the rest of the country which can move to Assam through this route. The things which can move out of Assam are bulk commodities like oil, tea, jute, timber, coal; paddy and rice. And things which can move inward, towards Assam, are cement, foodgrains, edible oils and such other bulk materials. These are not perishable items. But why is it that it has not been possible for the Inland Waterways Corporation or the Ministry to ensure that there is a dramatic improvement in the movement of cargo? That is basically because of the fact that there is a tremendous amount of reluctance on the part of those who are responsible for moving the cargo to move this cargo by water. In this connection I am sure the honourable Minister is aware of the truck lobby, the road transport lobby, which operates against it and sees to it that inland water transport does not develop, specially along this sector and I would like to tell the honourable Minister that unless we are able to fight the machinations of the truck lobby it will not be possible for the CIWTC or the Inland Water Transport Authority to operate.

Now, this is development in slow motion because only one per cent of the total cargo moved in this country's transport system is moved by inland water transport. I would like to mention that in other countries which we regard as developed countries, inland water transport plays a very, very major role. The total transport handled on the inland water port of Canton is more than the traffic which is handled in many of our ports. Similarly, in the USSR, USA, West Germany and France, the development of inland water transport has received the kind of attention which it should receive. If you go and see, on the Rhine there is continuous movement of barges. There are railway tracks on both sides of the Rhine river, there are roads on both sides of the Rhine river, and still there is a continuous movement of barges, tugs and all kinds of vessels on the Rhine river. That is the kind of advantage which the Germans are taking of their water routes.

Now, the National Transport Policy Committee which had submitted its report long ago—and which report had been accepted by the Government —had made two or three very specific suggestions in order to improve transportation of cargo by inland water ways, and I would like to draw the attention of the honourable Minis-

[Shri Jaswant Singh]

ter to these because these recommendations have been accepted by the Government but have not been implemented, and I would like to know from him what is the Government's current thinking on this and by what time they are going to implement these recommendations of the National Transport Policy Committee. One of the recommendations was that there should be research into the hull design of the vessels and also mechanization of country boats. Now, this must cater to the requirements of local conditions. We do not want to import technology in this regard from France, West Germany or the USA. We must be able to see how indigenous crafts which are already plying on the rivers can be made more efficient. If this is done, then I am sure that a lot of improvement might take place. But I am not aware of any advance which the Government might have made, any progress they might have made in regard to their design to suit local conditions, engine design and all those things.

The other is that the National Transport Policy Committee had also recommended that we should have an Inland Vessels Development Fund on the lines of the now abolished Shipping Development Fund. I do not think the Government has so far given thought to this. Now that we have this Inland Waterways Authority and we are going to declare the second river as a national waterway, I would suggest that the public sector, namely, the Central Inland Water Transport Corporation, alone will not be able to meet the requirements, and it is most important that we involve the boatmen who are plying in large numbers on these rivers. They must be involved and that will be the real social benefit accruing to the weaker sections and they must be given all assistance, all the facilities, in order to be able to take advantage of the improvement in these waterways. Therefore, I would like to know from the honourable Minister what has happened to the recommendation of the National Transport Policy Committee to set up an Inland Vessels Development Fund.

Another recommendation of the National Transport Policy Committee, which is also very important from the point of view of development of inland water Transport, is about insurance not only of vessels but also of cargo. The shippers must be able to settle their claims and settle them quickly. Therefore, we must have an insurance scheme which will create the necessary confidence in the minds of the shipping community to be able to take advantage of this Board. Now, these are the three recommendations of the National Transport Policy Committee which have not been implemented by the Govervent and it is most essential that this receives the attention of the Government as quickly as possible.

We have this Inland waterway Authority Bill, 1986. Now, it has taken many of the provisions of the 1982 Act. I would like to point out in this connection that at the time when this Act was being passed in 1986, the present Minister had given an assurance at the question of deciding which place will be the headquarters of the Inland Waterways Transport Authority of India shall be decided after the Bill was passed. Now, this Authority, unfortunately, has also been set up in Delhi. The Headquarters is probably in Delhi or at some place near Delhi. I do not understand why the Government insists on setting up all these offices and Authorities in Delhi. Delhi is already a crowded place. I am aware that the Government has a policy to decentralise and to take the offices elsewhere outside Delhi. I am surprised despite this assurance that this matter will receive the consideration of the Government, the Ministry has decided to set up the Authority in Delhi. I would like to take this opportunity to demand that the Headquarters of this Authority should be

shifted away from Delhi, because we are not living in the 19th century, when ships used to come to Garhmukteshwar and Agra. We have most of our rivers in the eastern region, in Bihar and elsewhere. I am not saying that they should be located in Patna. I would not be parochial to make this demand, but I certainly suggest that this should be taken to a more appropriate place.

One last point. This, of course, will come up when the Minister makes a statement on the ferry disaster. But I would just like to say as a note of caution to the Minister, because yesterday when my colleague, Shri Ram Awadhesh Singh, was raising this point, the hon. Minister pointed out that this was entirely a State Government subject and therefore, we could not discuss it here and that he could not make a statement on it. I would like to say that under the Inland Waterways Authority Act there are provisions which should have been carefully gone through, which enjoin the responsibility on this Authority to do a number of things and if this Authority had done a number of things, then the ferry disaster would not have taken place. One of these things is to disseminate navigational meteorological information about the National Waterways. This steamer did show that it hit the bottom of the river and sank. If this information, which is the responsibility under this Act, of the National Waterways had been implemented, if the National Waterways Authority had an Office there, knowing that it was an important ferry route, then this could not have happened. Then they would have established and maintained piloting. Now, piloting is something which we will discuss later, but what I am saying is that you should published river charts because these are all responsibilities enjoined upon the Waterways Authority by this Act.

Now, I understand that the Rules have not been framed under this Act. It is very sad because this Act was passed in 1986. And if the Rules have not been framed, then I would humbly suggest, the Government must hurry up with the Rules, because in the absence of these Rules, the Act remains a dead letter, and it cannot be implemented. Therefore, while I will end by saying that I welcome this Bill, which I am sure will be welcomed especially by the people of Assam, because it is a long-overdue measure, I would suggest to the hon. Minister that simultaneously with the Declaration of this waterway as a national waterway, attempts should be made to see that it is effectively implemented with all the infrastructural work. Your allocation for the Seventh Plan is very meagre. With this you are able to complete only the slipway as Pandu. Now, in the Eighth Plan much more will have to be done on this river in order to effectively implement the provisions of this Act. Thank you.

[The Vice-Chairman (Dr. R. K. Poddar) in the Chair.]

*SHRI NARAYAN KAR (Tripura): Mr. Vice-Chairman, Sir, the Hon. Minister has moved the National Waterway (Sadiya-Dhubri Stretch of the Brahmaputra River) Bill, 1988. I do not find any reason to oppose this Bill. It is for the first time that after fortyone years of independence the Government of India has decided to declare a portion of Brahmaputra river as the National Waterway. As you know, Sir, the transport system in the North-Eastern region is very weak. Recently in the North-Eastern region the national highways have been closed. The railway transport is still at a standstill. It is neither carrying passengers not goods. So is the case with the road transport. Consequently, the people are not getting foodgrains, coal and other essential commodities. It has become very difficult to transport foodgrains and other essential commodities to different States in the North-Eastern region.

*English translation of the original speech delivered in Bangali.

[Shri Narayan Kar]

As a member from the North-Eastern region I welcome this Bill. If the Government of India had paid its attention to the development of transport systems in the North-Eastern region earlier, the transport systems in that part of the country would have been better today. But they have decided to improve the transport systems in the North-Eastern region after forty one years of independence.

River transport system is an ancient transport system in our country. Through this Bill the Government wants to declare 800 Km. waterway of Brahmaputra river as the national waterway.

River tarnsport system is the cheapest mode of transport. It also engages a large number of labourers. Thus, the national waterway of Brahmaputra will provide employment opportunities to many people in the North-Eastern region.

This national waterway is for Brahmaputra river. But there are other big rivers in the North-Eastern region. The Government of India should conduct a survey for other big rivers in the North-Eastern region so that they can also be declared as national waterways in the interest of improving the inland river transport system in that region.

Recently Guwahati and its neighbouring areas have been very much affected by devastating floods. The floods have caused heavy loss of property. The Government of India should, therefore, take urgent measures to save the people of the North-Eastern region from the fury of annual floods.

Let us look at the condition of national waterways which are already under the control of the Inland Waterways Authority of India. We find that those national waterways are gradually being silted. Consequently, those waterways are gradually being abandoned for want of navigability.

It has been said in the Financial Memorandum of the Bill that funds will be provided to start the national waterway in the river Brahmaputra. But I am unable to understand from it how much money the Central Government will specifically provide to maintain the navigability of this national waterway. I hope the Central Government will not allow this national waterway to be silted in course of time. For that purpose they should dredge the concerned river bed off and on.

At the end I would request the Hon. Minister to take adequate steps to maintain the navigabiliy of the rivers in the North-Eastern region. With these words, I conclude. Thank you.

SHRI BHUBANESWAR KALITA (Assam): Mr. Vice-Chairman, Sir, I rise to support this Bill. It is not only me who welcomes this Bill, but the beneficiaries, that is, people of my State, Assam also. This is a good attempt by our dynamic Surface Transport Minister to undertake shipping and navigation through the State's river. Sir, from time immemorial, this mode of transport is there in Assam. If we go back to history or even during the pre-independence period this mode of Inland Water transport was there and regular cargo traffic was there between Calcutta and Guwahati. This mode of transport is of very low cost it has employment opportunity, it is energy efficient and it generates less pollution. But I have my own reasons to support this Bill. Assam being a perennial flood affected area, road transport and rail transport are frequently disrupted due to floods and other natural calamities. So, this mode of transport, that is Inland Water transport is very necessary for that region and for State of Assam, because until and unless the movement of essential commodities are continuous or if it is disrupted because of disruption in rail or road transport then the common people of that area suffer very much. Now, with this mode of transport, we can overcome some of these difficulties. Moreover, Sir, a very low cost is involved for creating necessary infrastructural facilities for the Inland Water Transport and the expenditure to maintain the Inland Water Transport

is very best. Sir, if this stretch of river is properly developed, even the tourist can be attracted to visit those areas to enjoy the scenic beauty of Assam and North Eastern region. Sir, the department will have to take utmost care because if we take a stretch of river as National Waterway or even we set up an office or employ some persons, it does not serve the purpose until and unless the task is completed in full If it take five to 10 years to complete a scheme, people get frustrated. So, the Minitry must take care that the scheme is implemented practically and only then the common people will have confidence in the Inland Water. Transport. The financial memorandum of the Bill says:—

". . .the substantial quantum of Inland Water Transport traffic to the tune of 22.64 lakh tonnes of inter-State commodity traffic is likely to be carried on the proposed national waterway by the end of the financial year 1989-90."

Sir, I hope the hon. Minister will take personal interest to see that this is done. Sir, before concluding, I would like to draw the attention of the hon. Minister to two points. Sir, as you know, the Brahmaputra is a problem river and the Brahmaputra has got a lot of problem of erosion. So, for developing the ports, we must take care of this erosion and we must make provisions for some non-recurring cost over and above the actual expenditure of the scheme. Secondly, the riverbed of the Brahmaputra river is very high in some places. Therefore, to make it navigable, dredging operation will be necessary. Some years ago, the Government of Assam took up the dredging operation in some places in the Brahmaputra river, but they had to give it up because it involves a very high cost. So, I would like to request the hon. Minister to take care of this aspect and with these words, I conclude. Thank you.

श्री अश्विनी कुमार : माननीय उपसभाध्यक्ष, महोदय, नदियों के अन्दर अंतरदेशीय यातायात की व्यवस्था करने की जो व्यवस्था के लिए सुझाव आया है यह बहुत ही स्वागत योग्य है भारत के इतिहास का जब हम पहला पृष्ठ खोलते है तो हमें दिखाई देता है कि भारत के जहाज यहां की नदियों मे ही नहीं सारी दुनियां की नदियों मे यहा का माल ले जाते थे और वहा का माल यहां लाते थे इस देश की समृद्धि का बहुत बड़ा भाग यहां था कि यहां के जहाज और नावों का बहुत सुदृढ़ व्यवस्था था । जहा तक मैंने ज्ञान प्राप्त किया है, मंत्री जी को और भी ज्यादा होगा, हमारे जहाज दुनियां मे प्रसिद्ध थे । अभी चार पांच वर्ष पूर्व लदन में जो जहाज रखा गया था वह डेढ़ सौ साल पुराना था और भारत में बनाया गया था । लेकिन दुर्भाग्य का विषय है कि अंग्रेजों का तो इसमें स्वार्थ था कि उनके जहाज चलें और हमारे न चलें हमारी सरकार जब आई तो हमने कुछ अपनी जहाजरानी व्यवस्था को कुछ सुधारा पर अंतरदेशीय व्यवस्था की ओर हमारी सरकार ने दुर्लक्ष्य लिया यह मेरा कहना है ।

महोदय, हम इनलैंड वाटरवेज की योजना बना रहे हैं । लेकिन इसके साथ फलड कंट्रोल, नेविगेशन, यातायात और हाइडल पावर जनरेशन को भी इसमें जोड़ दें तो यह प्रोजेक्ट सस्ता बनेगा, बड़ा बनेगा और यदि सपूर्ण नदियों की सपूर्ण व्यवस्था पर ध्यान दिया जाए जिसमें इनलैंड वाटरवेज भी हो, उसमें गंगा, यमुना ब्रहमपुत्र पर यातायात की योजना हो तो इससे बहुत लाभ हो सकता है । लेकिन आजादी के बाद इस ओर दुर्लक्ष्य हुआ है । मेरे माननीय मित्र यशवन्त सिन्हा जी ने आंकड़े दिए हैं लेकिन जो कुछ यातायात हो रहा है यह सरकार की इच्छा के विपरीत हो रहा है । मुझे बिहार का और उत्तर प्रदेश का अनुभव है । जो हमारे छोटे-मोटे नाविक थे वे अपने रोजगार से हाथ धो रहें है और शहरों मे रिक्शा चला रहें हैं । आज माल की ढुलाई ट्रकों से होने लगी है । मेरा आपसे निवेदन है कि इस प्रोजेक्ट को समन्वित रूप से लिया जाए, देश के अन्य भागों को भी उसमें लिया जाए । ब्रहमपुत्र को लिया

[श्री अश्वनी कुमार]

जाए इस बारे में अभी आप सोच रहें हैं। एक समय गोहाटी और कलकत्ता का संबंध था लेकिन बंगला देश बनने से वह मार्ग अवरुद्ध हो गया। ब्रहमपुत्र से असम के लोग डूबते हैं यातायात की व्यवस्था हो सकती है, वहां से कलकत्ता पोर्ट के पास पानी पहुंचाया जा सकता है। कलकत्ता पोर्ट को 40 हजार क्यूसेक पानी चाहिए तो क्या सरकार सोचेगी कि एक बड़ी केनाल बनाई जाए तो धुबरी से कूच बिहार, जलपाईगुड़ी, वेस्ट दीनाजपुर, मालदा, करक्का होते हुए कलकत्ता को पानी दे सके। कलकत्ता पोर्ट हमारा मर रहा है। यदि समग्र व्यवस्था की बात आती है तो प्लानिंग कमीशन और सरकार के बड़े-बड़े अधिकारी कहते हैं कि इसमें बड़ा पैसा लगेगा। बाकी योजनाओं में पैसा खर्च करने में उनको आपत्ति नहीं है। हमारी ब्यूरोक्रेसी ऐसी योजनाओं चाहती हैं जिसमें बार-बार पैसा खर्च होता रहे। इसमें एक बार खर्चा होगा, बाद में रेकरिंग एक्सपेंडीचर नहीं होगा। एक चौथाई या सातवां हिस्सा उसका खर्चा आएगा। हम कास्टलियस्ट चीज की ओर जा रहे हैं, यह हमारी ब्यूरोक्रासी की प्लानिंग का बहुत दोष है। मैं आपके माध्यम से अपने विद्वान मंत्री जी से निवेदन करना चाहूंगा कि दूरगामी योजना बनाने का प्रयास करें और उसके लिए अभी जो पैसा रखा है यह तो ऊंट के मुह में जीरे के समान है। इससे कुछ होना-वोना तो है नहीं। अगर वास्तव में कुछ देना चाहते हैं तो जितना पैसा अन्य कार्यक्रमों के लिए दे रहे हैं उससे ज्यादा देने का प्रयास करें।

आपने 82 में इलाहाबाद-हलदिया को दिया। अन्य भी आपके सामने है दैट हैज बोन एन हाफ हर्टेड इकर्ट एंड प्रेक्टीकली नो एफर्ट। जो हो रहा है वह हो रहा है। सरकार का कितना माल कलकत्ता से पटना और इलाहबाद आता है और ट्रकों से आता है व ट्रेन से आता है। इस सेक्टर में ट्रेन हमारी सबसे ज्यादा हैवी लोडेड ट्रेन है क्या वह पानी से नहीं आ सकता। सरकार इसमें प्राथमिकता देने के लिए पब्लिक सेक्टर में सरकारी काम करने के लिए व्यवस्था करने को तैयार है। सरकार इसमें पहल करेगी तो सम्भवतः बाकी लोगों का भी हो। आज हमारी सरकार इक्लूडिंग पब्लिक सेक्टर इज वन आफ द बिगेस्ट ट्रांसपोर्ट सेक्टर एनी वेयर विद कमांडिंग हाईट। सबसे ज्यादा माल सरकार का ढोहा जाता है। वह उसमें भी ढोह सकती है बहुत-सा सामान ढोहा जा सकता है।

दूसरा प्रश्न यह है कि इलाहबाद-हलदिया को आपने अभी तक चालू नहीं किया। आज आप योजना पास करा रहे हैं, बिल पास करा रहे है इसका क्या करोगे? कितने दुर्भाग्य का विषय है कि जो बिल बना उसके रूल्स आज तक नहीं बने। एंटीपिथी, एपिथि है। सरकार के अधिकारी इस काम की ओर कितने अनइच्छुक हैं यह आपके सामने प्रदर्शन करना चाहता हूं। मंत्री महोदय यदि चाहते हैं, हम जानते हैं मंत्री महोदय ख्याति प्राप्त हैं, बहुत डायनामिक हैं जहां कोई समस्या होती है सबसे पहले मंत्री महोदय वहां पहुंच जाते हैं, चाहे नागालैंड की समस्या हो। आप पहुंचे मुझे कोई आपत्ति नहीं है। आपका जो डायनामिज्म है वह वाटरवेज में आये यह मेरी इच्छा है और इसके लिए मैं प्रार्थना करना चाहूंगा। इसी के साथ आपने हलदिया-इलाह बाद का किया है। बीच में उसके साथ जुड़ी हुई नदियां हैं—गंडक है, राप्ती है, यमुना है जिनके अन्दर लिया जा सका है। एक मित्र ने कहा बड़े-बड़े जहाज व्यवस्थित चलाने हैं तो उनकी ड्रेजिंग की व्यवस्था करनी पड़ेगी। जो इंटरनल वाटरवेज का बिल पास हुआ जिसमें बहुत सारी बातें आपके दायित्व में हैं जिन दायित्वों को निभाने में आज तक सरकार सर्वथा अक्षम रही है उन को आप को सुधारना होगा। जैसे बिहार की घटना हुई।

THE VICE-CHAIRMAN (DR. R. K. PODDAR): Pleased conclude now.

SHRI RAJESH PILOT: Mr. Vice-Chairman, Sir, to begin with, I thank the honourable Members who took part in this debate and made very valuable suggestions. Most of them have given their views.

Initially, Sir, an honourable Member from Andhra Pradesh talked about the Kakinada port. I have said in reply to questions in this House that the Government is very keen to develop the Kakinada port and out of Rs. 20 crores which was the total allocation for the Seventh Plan for minor ports, a sum of Rs. 10 crores has been earmarked for Kakinada port. Also in consultation with the State Government we have projected the development of this port with the Asian Development Bank and the total cost has now come to Rs. 19 crores. Out of this, the ADB has offered 75 per cent help from its side. So, the progress is on. But, just because other agencies are involved, it may take some time.

Sinhaji has mentioned various important points. I do agree with him that this sector has been neglected. Now, before I take the blame, I think Sinhaji should also share the blame because he was dealing with it and he was in a much better position to do. He has joined this family now.

SHRI YASHWANT SINHA: The first act was passed in my time.

SHRI RAJESH PILOT: I know it.

SHRI ASHWANI KUMAR: Mr. Minister, you have to take the blame and you cannot shift it to the other side though he can shift it to you.

SHRI RAESH PILOT: I am saying this in a lighter vein only.

SHRI ASHWANI KUMAR: I am also saying this in a lighter vein.

SHRI RAJESH PILOT: When I was flying aircraft in the Air Force, Sinhaji was dealing with inland water transport. Anyway, his sincerity and the intentions of the House are on the same line. Now, if you have neglected this sector earlier, it is time that we picked it up now. If you see the figures, in the Third Plan we had allocated only Rs. 12 crores for the inland water transport sector. Today, in the Seventh Plan, we have given Rs. 155 crores from the Budget, by way of budgetary support, and another Rs. 71 crores from the State Governments. So, it means that we have Rs. 226 crores in the Seventh Plan. Now it is a jump, but this is not a jump which is required to catch up with the period which has been neglected. I do agree with him that in 1982 it was declared as a National Waterway and a lot of work was planned during that period. But, after we established the Inland Water Transport Authority, Sir, I can assure the House that I am personally monitoring every month the progress. But the process and the procedures are such and so many and so complicated that even to buy a vessel you have to undergo so many formalities which cannot be cut out because the system has been tuned to that line. But still we have made a lot of progress in this sector. Now, we are operating from Calcutta to Patna regularly and we have touched Allahabad also during the monsoon period because we do not have the required draught as per the measurements. But during the monsoon season we made four or five trials and it worked well and I am hopeful that with the dredging and other measures that are being taken up, up to Allahabad it should be fully operational soon.

SHRI YASHWANT SINHA: How soon?

SHRI RAJEH PILOT: I assure you that I will monitor personally and I think that the need of the hour is that we must implement the measures in a more strict manner and in a regulated manner and we will do that. We will do that If you see the CIWTC performance we had in 1981-82 carried round about 75,000 metric tonnes and in 1986-87 we carried 3.21 lakh tonnes. It means that there is an increase. Between the gap which you have mentioned there were problems of the Farakka barrage. Because of that it was not very much operational. And because of the closure of the paper mill the cargo was

SHRI ASHWANI KUMAR: It is a very important aspect. I ac not taking much time. I am just pointing out the important aspects to be attended so.

आप कहते हैं हमारा विषय नहीं है। वहां पर क्या सरकार के ध्यान में है कि रेलवे का वहां स्टीमर चलता था और रेलवे ने अपना स्टीमर विदड्रा कर लिया? क्या रेलवे बिहार सरकार की चीज है? क्यों विदड्रा कर लिया? क्या उसके ऊपर प्राइवेट ठेकेदार का प्रैशर नहीं था कि रेलवे का स्टीमर विदड्रा कर लिया जाये और प्राइवेट का 100 साल पुराना जर्जर वहां चलाया जाये। उस स्टीमर की देख-भाल कौन करेगा? सरकार के कुछ नियम हैं। रेलवे के अपने नियम हैं। मोटर ट्रांस्पोर्ट के अपने नियम हैं। ट्रक की वैरीफिकेशन होती है, ट्रक की इंस्पैक्शन होती है, अप-टू-डेट है या नहीं देखा जाता है, कार को देखा जाता है, बायलर को देखा जाता है। बिहार में जो प्राइवट स्टीमर चलता है उसकी देखभाल करने वाला कोई माई-बाप है? घूस देकर चला दिया है उसको। मैं जानता हूं हम भी उस स्टीमर में चढ़े हैं। हम जानते हैं कितनी जर्जर हालत है उसकी। क्या सरकार 400 लोगों के मर जाने के बाद यह कह कर हाथ छोड़ सकती है कि हमारा कोई दायित्व नहीं है? दायित्व है, मोरल दायित्व है। वहां रेलवे का स्टीमर चलता था उसको विदड्रा करा दिया उसी के कारण यह घुर्घटना हुई। मैं स्पष्ट आरोप लगाना चाहता हूं कि रेलवे का स्टीमर हटाया गया प्रैशर के अंदर और प्राइवट ठेकेदार के स्टीमर को लाया गया। यह बहुत जजर हालत में था इसी कारण उनकी मृत्यु हुई।

आज मांग हो रही है भागलपुर से मनिहादीघाट तक पुल बनना चाहिए। यह आपकी मिनस्ट्री के अंदर, सरफेस के अंदर आता है। उसकी कोई व्यवस्था नहीं हो रही है। अगर पुल बन जायेग तो इससे वहां लाभ होगा। गंगा का जो स्वरूप है बड़ा विचित्र है। बरसात में तो 8 मील का पाट हो जाता है। गर्मी आते-आते नावें चलनी मुश्किल हो जाती हैं। इसके लिए जैसा मेरे मित्र ने कहा उसके बराबर की व्यवस्था ड्रेजिंग के द्वारा होनी चाहिए। एक चैनल बने रहना चाहिए जिसमें वह जाये। जो ज्योग्राफिकल पोजिशन है उसको देख कर सारा काम करेंगे तो बहुत अच्छा होगा। थोड़े से सुझाव मैंने दिये हैं। जब आप इनको मान लेंगे तो हम मान सकते हैं कि आप वास्तव में इस काम को करने के लिए प्रस्तुत हैं नहीं तो केवल एक आईवाश होगा, दुनिया को दिखावा होगा। दुनिया को आप दिखायें कि यह बिल तो पास कर दिया गया है, लेकिन हम कुछ धरातल पर आकर भी काम कर रहे है।

7 P.M.

अन्त में मैं यही निवेदन करना चाहता हूं कि आपका यह कदम बहुत महत्वपूर्ण है और आसाम के लिए तो और भी अधिक महत्वपूर्ण है। इसके अलावा चैनल के संबंध में मैंने जो सुझाव दिया है उसके बारे में भी आप विचार करें और इस संबंध में प्लानिंग कमीशन से और प्राइम मिनिस्टर के पास जायें और आसाम और पूर्वांचल से संबंध जोड़ा जाये। इससे कलकत्ता पोर्ट भी सम्बद्ध हो सकता है। इसके अलावा मैं यह भी कहना चाहता हूं कि जैसे अनेक माननीय सदस्यों ने आपको ट्रक लाबी के बारे में सावधान किया है, मैं भी यह कहना चाहता हूं कि ट्रक लाबी से सावधान होकर अगर आप काम करेंगे तो आप अपने उद्देश्य में सफल हो सकते हैं। अगर आपने ट्रक लाबी के आगे घुटने टेक दिये तो आपकी सब योजनाओं पर प्रश्न-चिन्ह लग सकता है। इसलिए आप शीघ्र निर्णय लें। मैं फिर से कहना चाहूंगा कि यह स्वागत योग्य काम है देर आयद दुरुस्त आयद, आप अच्छा काम करेंगे तो सभी लोग उसका स्वागत करेंग। इन शब्दों के साथ मैं आपको धन्यवाद देता हूं।

not available. Last time when I had gone to Assam areas, I had requested the State Government and the Central Government agencies that all their cargo should be given away to inland water transport to encourage it initially. And I was very happy that the FCI immediately acted and we gave the FCI all the cargo going from Dibrugarh, Tezpur and Jorhat. But since this survey was on, we were not sure about the drought. As the hon. Member from Assam mentioned, we were not sure of the river beds at a few places. We did not take that much of chance. But now it completed, and now the House has agreed to declare it as national waterways. We will monitor the progress of Brahmputra very regularly. It is a fact, Sir, that it is one of the sectors which helps the poor. It is the sector which is most economical. That is why the Government has put up so much effort and the allocation has been reasonably well in comparison to the previous Five Year Plan. I am happy that the Government has recently taken the decision that we must have a total transport integrated approach for the whole country. We should not have a railway line and then we should have a road here and a road there or inland water transport facilities. I have resonally written to all the State Governments. Even whenever in big canals they construct a bridge, they must keep in mind that we might have inland water barges.

So these measures have been taken. One point has been made about trucks. I do agree that sometimes these thtngs happen. But if you recollect the functioning of this Department, in 1985 end we took a decision to abolish the quota system of permits which was sustaining in this system. We took it purposely so that there is no lobby in transport, there is no monopoly in the transport sector That is why when we decentralised the quota system we said that anybody who has got a truck and pays our fee to the Government can do it; no permit is required. Because of the decentralisation all the problems will be solved to a great extent. I assure the House that no pressure wil work in the national interest. This is an assurance to the House. You must have full faith in us. We will march very strongly in the national interest.

Sinhaji made some points about the Bihar accident. The whole House is worried, the whole country it worried. It is really a very bad tragedy and mishap. What I said was that I do not mean that I do not own responsibility. Leave aside my Ministership, leave aside by being an MP, as a citizen I own responsibility, moral responsibility. Being a Minister, I owe responsibiltiy of that department. What I have said is that this is a State subject.

SHRI HARI SINGH (Uttar Pradesh): As Minister you have got responsibility for the performance... (*Interruptions*)

SHRI RAJESH PILOT: I am coming to that. As per the Constitution, as per the law——I am a Minister, that is all right——I cannot really catch every truck on the road, which ts being controlled by the State Governments, who can ask: all right, but where are you moving? As per the Constitution, as per the administration there are some systems. That is how we are working. Responsibilities have to be divided: this is the State sector, this is the Central Government sector, and so on. (*Interruption*). The hon. Member knows that there is a charter of duties. You must follow that. You cannot involve Central Government everywhere and say, 'You are responsible'...

SHRI HARI SINGH: It is a new source of transport system. This is a budding department of the country.

SHRI RAJESH PILOT: The honourable Member should know that this statement was a private one running in that sector and it was probably permitted. I do not know the details yet. The State Government officials have come here and we are getting full details. I am going to make a statement in the House giving full facts and figures. I can assure you nobody found guilty, whether at our level, at the Central level, or at the State Government

[Shri Rajesh Pilot]

level, will be spread. But you cannot really jump to conclusions immediately. You have to know the facts. As a responsible member of the Government I have to inform the House correct facts and figures... (*Interruption*) Mr. Vice-Chairman, you should ask the honourable Member not to interrupt me like this every minute when I have not yielded. He is experienced enough.

Then, he mentioned about the recommendations of the National Transport Committee. Some of the recommendations have been accepted. Some are being processed. And we are aware that these recommendations are very important and they are in the interests of the transport sector. Wherever it should be hastened, we shall do it. Lastly, Mr. Kumar and Mr. Bhubaneswar Kalita from Assam have pointed out about the erosion in the riverbeds. As I have mentioned, after the hydrographic survey is carried out, we know the position of the riverbeds and we will certainly take care before we make it operational. Mr. Kumar mentioned about an integrated system of getting the Brahmaputra water up to the Calcutta Port. I would certainly check up how far it could be possible. Then he mentioned about efforts to be put more on linking the inland water transport for using the inland transport sector. We have been planning that; even in the in the north sector we can get our cargo up to Patna by road and from Patna by inland up to Calcutta or some other port. And that is why during my last visit to the Netherlands, I had discussions with that Government. They seemed to be experts in inland water. They were kind enough to have a study made of Patna as an inland water transport port so that we can have our inland water port at Patna, get all the cargo, export cargo, which is to be shipped up to Patna—it could be by rail or by road, as the case may be—and from there by inland ports. This scheme is being thought of. It is a very difficult idea. But our idea is to use the maximum inland water ways and wherever water transport channels are available.

One point has been mentioned about the headquarters of the Inland Water Transport Authority. It is in UP. We initially kept it at NOIDA...

SHRI ASHWANI KUMAR: NOIDA is Delhi. Don't be so technical and call it UP. It is Delhi.

SHRI RAJESH PILOT: When he said it is a different State, I had to put it like that. Initially we thought it is a new set up coming up and to sort out a lot of problems it might require day-to-day attention and consultation. If it was fully operational we could have put it anywhere. Then we thought of having three regional offices—in northeast, south and one in UP or Bihar, whichever is found suitable. At Patna we are going to have a research institute. Because the port is going to come up there, we will have a training institute. That is what has been planned, with headquarters initially at NIODA. I agree with you, Government policy is not to keep many offices in Delhi but to shift them away from Delhi. In any case there is no place left in Delhi where you can have offices. At least let me assure the House that this is an important sector. And Government views it with that seriousness. That is why the location, the efforts and the setting up of the Inland Water Transport Authority is on that direction. And we are working hard. As far as some delay in implementation which the Members felt is concerned, I assure the hon. Members that we will remove that also and we will move with a faster speed and get these actions implemented.

Thank you, Sir.

श्री अश्विनी कुमार : मंत्री महोदय, जब आप हेड आफिस की बात कर रहे हैं तो मैं यह निवेदन करना चाहता हूं कि हेड आफिस के मामले में बिहार के साथ घोर पक्षपात हुआ है। चार रेलवे सिस्टम बिहार को फीड करते हैं लेकिन किसी का हेड आफिस बिहार में नहीं है। मैं कहना चाहता हूं कि बिहार में बहुत सारी

बड़ी बड़ी कम्पनियां रही हैं, उनका सारा व्यापार धंधा रहा है मगर वहां हेड आफिस नहीं है। अतः इसको कम से कम बिहार में देने की कृपा करें यह मैं एक आपसे निवेदन करना चाहता हूं। मंत्री जी श्री दूबे जी भी बैठे हैं; इसका समर्थन करेंगे।

THE VICE-CHAIRMAN (DR. R. K. PODDAR): We are not discussing the Railways.

Now, the question is:

"That the Bill to provide for the declaration of the Sadiya-Dhubri Stretch of the Brahmaputra river to be a national waterway and also to provide for the regulation and development of the said stretch of that river for purposes of shipping and navigation on the said waterway and for matters connected therewith or incidental thereto, as passed by Lok Sabha, be taken into consideration."

The motion was adopted.

THE VICE-CHAIRMAN (DR. R. K. PODDAR): We shall now take up clause-by-clause consideration of the Bill.

Clauses 2 *and* 3 *and the Schedule were added to the Bill.*

Clause 1, *the Enacting Formula and the Title were added to the Bill.*

SHRI RAJESH PILOT: Sir, I beg to move:

"That the Bill be passed."

The queestion was put and the motion was adopted.

MATERNITY BENEFIT (AMENDMENT) BILL, 1987.

THE MINISTER OF LABOUR (SHRI BINDESHWARI DUBEY): Sir, I beg to move:

"That the Bill further to amend the Maternity Benefit Act, 1961, be taken into consideration."

As the Hon'ble Members will be aware, the Maternity Benefit Act, 1961 regulates the employment of women in certain establishments before and after child birth and provides for maternity and certain other benefits. The Act applies in the first instance to factories, mines, plantations and the circus industry. It can be extended to other establishment by the State Governments. There is no wage limit for coverage under the Act.

With the gradual extension of coverage under the Employees' State Insurance Act, which also provides for maternity and certain other benefits, the area of application of the Materinty Benefit Act has shrunk to some extent. The coverage under the ESI Act is, however, at present restricted to factories and certain other specified categories of establishments located in specified areas. The Maternity Benefit Act is, therefore, still applicable to women employees employed in establishments which are not covered by the ESI Act, as also to women employees, employed in establishments covered by the ESI Act, but who are out of it because of the wage limit.

Under the Act, women employees are entitled to maternity benefit at the rate of average daily wages for the period of their actual absence upto 12 weeks due to delivery. In cases of illness arising due to pregnancy etc. they are entitled to additional leave with wages for a period of one month. They are also entitled to six weeks maternity benefit in case of miscarriage. The Act also makes certain provisions to safeguard the interest of pregnant woman workers. The Act was last amended in 1976. Since then certain suggestions for further amendments have been received. A Working Group of the Economic Administration Reforms Commission had reviewed the provisions of the Act in 1984 and made certain recommendations for amendment of the Act. The various suggestions and recommendations have been considered and it is now proposed to carry out certain amendments in that.

Some of the more important amendments are: Provisions of the Act are